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***Motacilla samveasnae* is the correct scientific name for the Mekong Wagtail**

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The Mekong Wagtail *Motacilla samveasnae* was described recently (Duckworth *et al.* 2001). The spelling of its name was questioned by van Rootselaar (2002), who stated that 'Following the nomenclatural rules of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature...and considering that the species' name was 'formed directly from a modern personal name' and that 'the name is to be formed by adding to the stem of that name -i if the personal name is that of a man', the Mekong Wagtail's scientific name should perhaps be cited as '*Motacilla samveasnai* Duckworth *et al.* 2001', instead of '*Motacilla samveasnae*'. This proposal is not correct, and would lead to confusion if adopted.

The *International code of zoological nomenclature*, fourth edn (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature 1999) governs the formation and usage of all names proposed on or after 1 January 2000. Article 31.1.1 states that 'A species group name, if a noun in the genitive case formed from a personal name that is Latin, or from a modern personal name that is or has been Latinized, is to be

formed in accordance with the rules of Latin grammar'. Article 31.1.2 states that 'A species group name, if a noun in the genitive case...formed directly from a modern personal name, is to be formed by adding to the stem of that name *-i* if the personal name is that of a man,... *-ae* if of a woman...'. Those proposing names are at liberty whether to follow article 31.1.1 or 31.1.2. The bird is named after Sam Veasna, a man (Poole 2000), and therefore under article 31.1.2 it would take the form '*samveasnai*', as suggested by van Rootselaar. However, the masculine genitive singular ending *-ai* may not have existed in Classical Latin (if it did, it was very rare), the genitive singular of Latin nouns (of either gender) ending in *-a* typically being *-ae* (e.g. *agricola*, *-ae*, masculine, a farmer). Proposing the name under article 31.1.1 avoids the awkward '*ai*' ending. As a personal name '*samveasna*' is a noun. In treating its genitive as '*samveasnae*' it was Latinized in accordance with the rules of Latin grammar. The present example is thus analogous to that presented under article 31.1.1, whereby a man's name, '*Poda*', is also used directly, and given the genitive form of '*podae*'. This style has typically been used for species-group names where the man's name ends in *-a*, e.g. *Turdus feae* and *Muntiacus feae*, both named after Leonardo Fea, the (male) Italian ornithologist and collector.

The code makes it clear that the spelling '*samveasnae*' should be retained unchanged. Article 32.1 defines 'the 'original spelling' of a name as the spelling used in the work in which the name was established' (in this case, Duckworth *et al.* (2001), who used '*samveasnae*'). Article 32.2 states that 'the original spelling of a name is the 'correct original spelling', unless it is demonstrably incorrect as provided in Article 32.5'. Article 32.5 defines incorrect original spellings. Article 32.5.2 deals with presentational issues (diacritics, ligatures, apostrophes, hyphens etc.) and article 32.5.3 refers only to family-group names. The only part of article 32.5 relevant to *Motacilla samveasnae* is article 32.5.1, which states, 'if there is in the original publication itself, without recourse to any external source of information, clear evidence of an inadvertent error...it must be corrected.' Nowhere in Duckworth *et al.* (2001) did we state or imply that article 31.1.2 was used in forming the name (this was an assumption by van Rootselaar), nor did we state that Sam Veasna was a man. Thus, there are no grounds for considering '*samveasnae*' an incorrect original spelling as defined by the code.

Article 32.3 specifies that 'the correct original spelling of a name is to be preserved unaltered, except where it is mandatory to change the suffix or the gender ending under Article 34'. No provision of article 34 is relevant to this case: all deal with 'mandatory changes in spelling consequent upon changes in rank or combination'.

Hence, no article in the code supports van Rootselaar's statement that the original spelling should be changed. Because this is a complex issue, the code provides specific guidance through article 31.1.3: 'The original spelling of a name

formed under Articles 31.1.1 and ... [see above] is to be preserved unless it is incorrect [Arts. 32.3, 32.4]' (see above).

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The above contribution raises an interesting issue, of which future contributors of papers describing new taxa, or proposing new names for existing taxa, need to be mindful. Both the etymologies of English and scientific names, and their derivations, should be clearly explained in all such cases. In the present instance, the authors of the new wagtail, *Motacilla samveasnae*, have successfully demonstrated that their original name was correct, but a clear explanation of the derivation of their suffix in the original publication would have avoided the need for such clarification.—THE EDITOR.